

## Gratiot County, Mich., to send out the hounds after court deadbeats

Posted by Greg Nelson | For The Saginaw News August 16, 2008 21:24PM

ITHACA -- Lawbreakers in Gratiot County owe more than \$2.3 million in unpaid fines, costs and other court fees, and members of the county Board of Commissioners say they would like to get back at least some of that money.

With a unanimous vote, members approved a pilot "Circuit Court collection program." It authorized County Clerk Carol Vernon to hire a contractual employee to work 16 hours a week at a cost of \$6,200 a year.

The person will research court records to determine the amount due in each case; to find out if the money is collectible; to notify the debtor, parole and probation agents and the state Department of Corrections of their attempt to collect; and to send out billings.

The initiative is included in the 2008-09 fiscal year budget.

Commissioner Tim Lambrecht noted the initiative has succeeded in other counties.

"I think it's something we need to get on," he said. "That's money that's owed to us and the people of Gratiot County."

Commissioner Roger Cook said the state is responsible for collecting and that it shouldn't cost the county anything.

"I've had it to here with the state of Michigan not doing what it is supposed to do," he said.

"This may set a precedent in other areas."

Cook said the "payback could be significant" and supported the initiative on a one-year trial basis beginning in October.